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The not-so-groovy movies of 2013

Metro takes a look at some of this year's films that, despite holding promise, didn't exactly deliver PAGE 19

2013 in a nutshell

Plenty of stories caught fire (hall) this year, but it was the absurd stories that took off on social media for Metro, including a prankster's lawn experiment, children given crackers to make their lunches 'healthy' — and the misadventures of Toilet Squirrel

DAVID VAN DYKE/ILLUSTRATION

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Local

Metro Winnipeg's newsroom shares the stories that left an impact on them this year.

My very own Deep Throat: The Roughrider Prankster

Uniquely Canadian. Reporters wait their entire careers for this magic moment...

SHANE GIBSON
Metro reporter

Every reporter who's gotten into the business since Woodward and Bernstein wrote All the President's Men has dreamed of having their own Deep Throat.

We long to get a call from a raspy-voiced secret source who leaks us highly sensitive information provided we promise to protect their identity until the grave.

After five years of waiting, I finally got my own uniquely Canadian Deep Throat moment this fall.

In early October, as the Winnipeg Blue Bombers were capping off their worst season since, well, the year before, Metro heard reports that someone had somehow written "Go Riders" in huge letters on a grassy berm near the Bombers' new stadium.

I headed straight to Investors Group Field to... investigate. After about an hour of searching I found the lettering.

It wasn't spray-painted onto the grass; somehow, someone had fertilized the letters into the berm.

So I called a lawn-care expert to find out exactly how the green-thumbed vandal had done it. I learned all about fertilizer application and printed the expert's theory that a liquid fertilizer had been used to do the dastardly deed in the next day's paper.

That's when I got the call I'd been waiting for my entire career.

"What you wrote was wrong: Liquid fertilizer wouldn't have worked, it would have leached all over the place," was all the gruff sounding man said.

I asked him how we knew that, and he told me that he was the Roughrider prankster.

A Rider fan in Winnipeg — but originally from Saskatchewan — became Shane Gibson's Deep Throat after taking responsibility for the "Go Riders" message written with fertilizer near Investors Group Field. SHANE GIBSON/METRO

I threw my arms into the air and started recording the call.

He wouldn't tell me his name (as a Saskatchewan Roughrider fan living in Winnipeg, he was rightly terrified of retribution) but he wanted to set the record straight.

It wasn't liquid fertilizer he had used. It was granular fertilizer.

That was it. He just wanted Winnipeg to know exactly how he'd gotten them back for "years of being made fun of" for his choice to remain a Rider fan while living in Swaggerville.

My Deep Throat might not have brought down a president, but he did publicly belittle an entire Prairie city and their beloved football team.

And I will never reveal the identity of the Roughrider prankster.

Readers' online selections You told us — via our Metropolitan Panel — which online stories affected you most :

Proudest

From mental illness to mental wellness

A Winnipeg man and his wife, who said a relatively new approach to treating mental illness silenced his symptoms of schizophrenia, told their story on film to help others.

Sean Miller and his wife Doris started an online fundraising campaign to raise $15,000 to film, produce, and distribute a documentary about Targeted Amino Acid Therapy, which they say changed their lives.

Proudest

Brandon granny urges Manitobans 'Fight on!' against winter

A series of Youtube videos popped up on Youtube this year called Canadian Granny Defies Winter, featuring a Brandon woman participating in outdoor activities — from skating to cross-country skiing — wearing only a black swimsuit, a trapper's hat (basically a toque with ear flaps) and appropriate footwear.

In the videos, the woman urged Manitobans to "Fight on!"

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Toilet Squirrel was the summer story that had many of us looking warily at our toilets this year. BERNICE PONTANILLA/METRO

The nutty tale of Toilet Squirrel

Wet and wild. This famous furry fella had many of us looking before lifting the lid

Feeling flushed

"Out of all of the toilets it could have climbed out of, I'm glad it was mine and that I could help it."

Angela Campbell, who found a soaking, frightened squirrel in her toilet

BERNICE PONTANILLA
Metro reporter

It was the summer story that had Winnipeggers — and likely many other people all over North America — looking warily at their toilets when they went to the bathroom.

And it led to 15 minutes of fame for a St. James woman, all thanks to a little critter that somehow ended up in her toilet — wet, scared and clinging for dear life.

Angela Campbell said it was her love of making people laugh that spurred her to contact Metro just hours after her encounter with — and rescue of — Toilet Squirrel.

"The hype lasted about two weeks," said Campbell in a December interview with Metro, adding it was never figured out if the squirrel's appearance was due to repairs on their street by the city's water and waste department, or if it got in from the roof.

Campbell and her partner heard a ruckus in their bathroom at about 7 a.m. on June 12. After they found the squirrel in the toilet, Campbell used barbecue tongs to fish it out and washed it with small buckets of water in her tub. She then set it free on her deck and it ran away.

Once Metro broke the story online, Campbell was inundated with requests for interviews from local, national and international media outlets.

"The interviews were fun and I enjoyed reading all the comments, posts and parodies," she said.

"Someone opened a Twitter account for the squirrel, radio stations were naming it and memes were created. A co-worker even submitted the story to the Ellen show hoping it would be aired."

More readers' online selections

Saddest

Murder-suicide kills mom, 2 kids

Police called the death of Lisa Gibson and her two children a homicide-suicide after the kids were found unresponsive in a bathtub and were later pronounced dead in hospital. Gibson's body was found in a river a few days later.

Frothiest

Turns out crackers are healthy!

A mother was surprised when her kids came home from daycare with a note saying she'd be fined because the lunch she'd packed was unbalanced. Her kids were given Ritz crackers to conform to policy.

Saddest

8 puppies found in a ditch

Eight puppies were lucky to be alive after they were found dumped in a ditch. It wasn't known how long they had been there, but they apparently ate leaves, grass, dirt and twigs to survive.

Frothiest

Exposing the Hutterites

A group of former Hutterite members pulled back the veil on the secretive societies. Seven years after each decided to escape, the group of nine published a tell-all account of what life was like living shielded from the outside world.

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#omg! Readers all a-Twitter over TEMP

Canadian author Douglas Coupland, best-known for his groundbreaking novel Generation X, visited Metro's head office just before the launch of TEMP. The 20-part fiction series was published in Metro throughout November. Here's how Metro readers responded on Twitter:

@jason_michael: A sincere heartfelt Thank You to @DouglasCoupland for TEMP. I am a temp working for the government and your words continue to inspire!

@Teyemtenot: yet another reason why Metro is my favourite thing to read in the morning!

@hurricanediana: thanks for keeping me entertained for 20 a.m. commutes. Funny, surprisingly thought-provoking and relevant.

@KaT4_2012: read TEMP every day! #youguysnailedit #precariousworkiseverywhere Douglas Coupland is brilliant

@morgancadenhead: The collaboration between @DouglasCoupland and @MetroNewsCanada is fascinating. A truly unique way to approach fiction.

@SuzanneMaryse: i am loving this! ... Coupland nails the post-modern condition once again

@ctmwyn: The best part about @DouglasCoupland #Temp is the high concentration of #CliffHangers #Serialization

METRO

Web editor Hannah Zitner chats with Douglas Coupland during the author's visit to Metro's head office in Toronto on Oct. 28. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

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Digital

Metro's digital team takes a look back at 2013 and shares some of their most memorable stories.

Flowers sit on the Dublin grave of Lt. Thomas Leslie Bourke following a request from his great nephew on the other side of the world. ELMOSLATS/IMGUR

Restoring faith in humanity

Warm and fuzzies. Stories of kindness aren't as rare as we might think

ANDREW FIFIELD
Metro web editor

Internet chatter is often maligned as a squalid cesspool of anonymous viciousness.

The maligners are correct. We see what you write. You monsters.

The maligners are also wrong. The web is populated by millions, and the loudest voices aren't always the most accurate representation.

According to a traffic study of the New York Times website, readers are much more likely to share and comment on stories thick with warm and fuzzies.

This year, our experience with a Halifax man and a trans-Atlantic solid, done anonymously, fits snugly among those findings.

Last March, Andrew Bourke took to Reddit (speaking of maligned) with a moonshot request: For somebody who lives in Dublin to swill a St. Patrick's Day pint at the grave of his great uncle, who died more than 50 years before Bourke was born.

A short time later, a user named elmoslats replied with a simple "It was a bitch to find. Bought some flowers," linking to photos of the grave, newly festooned with flowers.

Below that reply came a cascade of kudos, plaudits, attaboys and robust reconstructions of a previously shattered faith in humanity.

For his part, a delighted Bourke told us, "I honestly cried." His offers of reward were spurned by elmoslats, who preferred to stay anonymous.

Despite comments we received from people revelling in a rare story of kindness, they aren't that rare. Amid the rancour of online discourse, most of us are simply cracking jokes, swapping hobbies and sharing experiences.

Sure, the rancour can be disheartening. But it's also critical to the experience — especially when it summons people happy to fight back.

So, perhaps instead of clutching to a seemingly slippery faith in humanity that wavers based on Twitter's daily mood, everybody should just keep up the good work in 2014.

We've done OK so far.

A life-changing story

Stranger than fiction

TAKARA SMALL
Metro web editor

Approximately 10 months ago my life changed.

A small, and what I imagined to be unimportant, story about the weathered Bible on my grandmother's nightstand brought me back in touch with a family member I had long assumed would be lost forever.

The book was and still is a treasured item. My grandmother cherished it during her early years in Canada. More importantly, however, it's a testament to the life she built in this country.

I was asked to write a story about my grandmother's Bible for a feature during Black History Month. I never thought the off-the-cuff story would connect me with a long lost relative.

I had lost contact with my aunt on my father's side of the family after my parents separated and I moved away from my childhood neighbourhood. The story (and picture) that appeared in the newspaper caught the eye of my aunt during her morning reading, who later contacted Torstar News Service.

Three weeks after the story ran in the paper I met her and my little cousin at my apartment — two blocks away from where she lives.

The digital evolution

Happy 22nd birthday, Hattie

QUIN PARKER
Digital national deputy editor

The web turned 22 this year. Think of all the 22-year-olds you know; they're mainly stable with some idea of who they are, right?

Well, HTTP (let's call her Hattie, for short) is nowhere close to that. She changes constantly. She spent last year obsessed with a South Korean pop star. Today, she won't shut up about Shiba Inus. She's viciously rude to strangers, yet capable of breathtaking kindness: Once, she raised $700,000 for a bullied bus monitor.

Hattie's got crazy schemes too: Her latest is persuading thousands to back a currency she made up and use it to buy things. Clever, but no wonder everyone thinks she's 10.

The only things that ever stay the same are her insatiable twin desires for pornography and cats.

I've spent my life as an editor trying to figure out what Hattie wants. But nobody will ever know. So enjoy the best of Metro digital. See you in 2014.

Selfie of the year

Duck face, sparrow ... and eagle

LACY ATALICK
Metro copy editor

Two weeks after the Oxford Dictionary declared "selfie" to be the word of the year, an Australian eagle with a flair for the topical put the icing on the proverbial cake by stealing a video camera, recording its 110-kilometre journey and, oh yeah, snapping a selfie along the way.

It was the picture-perfect (excuse the pun) news item to encapsulate a year in which the deluge of selfies inundating social media — all clicked, tagged, hashtagged, liked and shared unto infinity — grew to unprecedented proportions.

The eagle's is the best, most transcendent, least filtered selfie. Its beak seems to poke the camera's lens, to somehow pierce the scrim between parody and coincidence, and I can't help but laugh at what we've become.

Couch to 42K. How a fairweather runner became a marathoner

HANNAH ZITNER
Metro web editor

While I've always been a fairweather runner, I never wanted to run a marathon. Running 42.2 km just seemed like too much running. But when managing editor Fernando Carneiro came around shouting, like a newsy selling papers, "Who wants to run a marathon?" something changed. Maybe it was the competitive teenager in me coming out, or maybe I just felt bad for the over-ambitious guy, but I agreed.

And the Couch to 42K blog was born.

For the next 18 weeks, we ran, we wrote and we even made a few (un-publishable) videos. The blog gave us all (four in total) something to think about while we sweated through those 50 to 70 kilometres per week.

Batman

Throughout the 18 weeks of training, I had the honour of running with Dark Knight Runner, aka JP Hernandez — a dedicated athlete who ran the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon dressed as Batman to raise money for Sick Kids hospital.

Being the best at exercise

Co-runner/writer Liz Brown caused a wee stir after writing a blog post saying runners were just "trying to be the best at exercise" because "anyone can do it." People (well, running people) weren't happy.

Chest conferences

The most popular post on the blog turned out to be the one about my chest. It turns out that's what happens when you put boobs in a headline. After reaching out to ladies for bra suggestions, I began regularly receiving emails (and being accosted in the office washroom) from chesty ladies about how to control their bits.

Swag

Since we were writing about all things running (nutrition included), we started getting a light stream of (mostly terrible) health food sent to the office. The Simply Bar was among the worst. The case of electrolyte water was perhaps the best (only because the size is purse-perfect).

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The lighter side of the law. A dash of humour helps humanize VicPD

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro digital reporter

On the Metro digital desk, we're well aware that funny stories are more likely to be shared by our online readers; it's an insight we share with the Victoria Police Department.

Last year, when a naive Reddit user posted about buying marijuana at the University of Victoria, VicPD Const. Mike Russell was there.

Using the "VicPDCanada" handle, Russell announced himself with a simple "cough," reminding users that the long arm of the law extends online.

Since then, he and his partner Bowen Osoko have been working to build the force's social media cred.

And despite the serious nature of police work, the pair hasn't shied away from the absurdist humour endemic to Internet culture.

When cops busted drug dealers hiding cocaine in fake "Durasell" batteries in January, Russell penned a hilarious press release and offered tips to others looking to secure their stash.

"Don't forget to label it 'not drugs' so we don't inadvertently look inside," he said.

When handed the reins of the force's Twitter account in March, Osoko opted to spam followers with pictures of cats wearing hats.

"Being silly sometimes helps humanize our officers and make them more approachable. It's also just a lot of fun."

The Victoria Police Department has spammed Twitter followers with pictures of cats wearing hats, among other humorous tactics. COURTESY VICPD

Cats with hats

"Being silly sometimes helps humanize our officers and make them more approachable. It's also just a lot of fun."

Bowen Osoko, Victoria Police Department

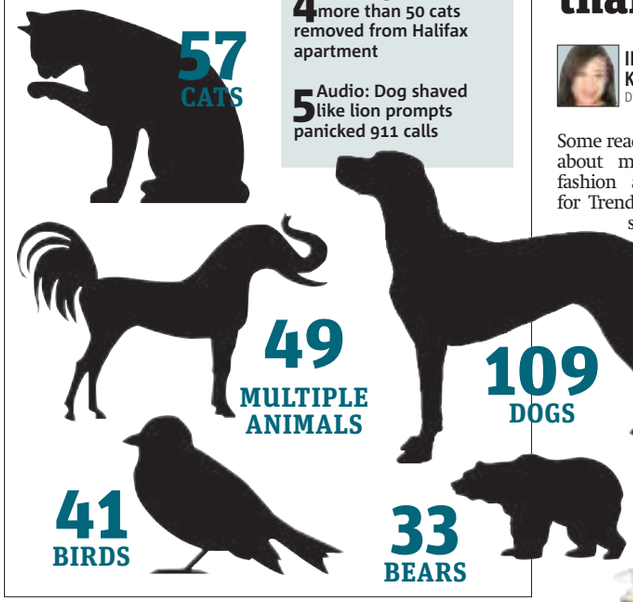
Which animal is top dog?

COLIN MCNEIL
Metro web editor

Animals. They're cute, they're cuddly, and they have a furry iron grip on the Internet. From the continuing antics of the Ikea monkey to the Toronto Zoo's pandas, it's been quite a year for Canadian fauna, but which four-legged friend is top dog at metronews.ca? The answer may give you paws for thought. There have been 539 stories on metronews.ca tagged "animals" in 2013. Here are the top 5 animals (by number of stories).

Top stories by views

1. Photos: Regina squirrels tangled by sticky situation
2. Warning: Graphic new images surface of GuZoo animal farm
3. Video: Elephant seal inhales meal in blink of an eye
4. Hoarding case sees more than 50 cats removed from Halifax apartment
5. Audio: Dog shaved like lion prompts panicked 911 calls



Irene Kuan's "sparrow face" selfies. CONTRIBUTED

Glymm. There's more to being a beauty editor than sparrow-face selfies

IRENE KUAN
Digital associate managing editor

Some readers have complained about my work as Metro's fashion and beauty blogger for Trends Report, labelling it sexist and shallow.

Granted, writing about "sparrow face selfies" and "bitchy resting face" doesn't suggest hard journalism, but the beauty industry is what it is.

In fact, if it hadn't been for an assignment reviewing beauty boxes, I would have never stumbled upon this story: One reader claimed she had been scammed by a subscription beauty box service called Glymm. The company charged her for a yearly subscription and then sent an abrupt email about their closure. It shuttered its business, website, Facebook and Twitter accounts, while keeping customers' money.

As a blogger, I care about my readers and their feedback.

I tracked the founder of Glymm using LinkedIn and badgered his secretary for information over the phone. I also used my ties as a beauty blogger to get reaction from other beauty-box businesses. After all, there were tons of irked Glymm subscribers in an industry that is still working to establish itself.

The week of April 25 the Glymm story generated more than 10,000 website views and 20,000-plus views on my Storify. It even prompted a company, Nail Polish Canada, to link to my story and provide free gifts to customers bilked by Glymm.

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National

2013 wasn't all about squirrels in toilets. Here are the stories that called us to action, inspired us or impacted our lives in other ways.

Metro story helps mentally ill man secure himself a new home

KATE WEBB
Metro reporter

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO IN VANCOUVER

'100 times better'

When asked to update a story that impacted me over the last year, I immediately thought of Stephen Chalmers. I interviewed him again last month.

The walkway up to his new trailer sparkles with red and blue Christmas lights, and on clear nights moonlight spills through tall pine trees onto the quiet campground where he has lived for nearly two months now.

The 54-year-old is still getting used to his new surroundings after moving out of a dilapidated trailer at the run-down Beladean Trailer Park in Surrey, B.C., which lost power in September due to an improperly supervised motel demolition.

"I'm 100 times better. I feel better, I sleep better," says Chalmers, who suffers from multiple mental illnesses and lives on a meagre disability income.

New digs, old issues

After Metro ran stories on the outage, and the fact that he couldn't find a new park willing to take his old, leaky trailer, an online campaign raised enough money to buy him a newer, 1999 fifth-wheel.

But the complex problems of a man who has overcome crack addiction and alcoholism and still struggles daily with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder cannot be neatly resolved with four walls of aluminum and vinyl. Some days he feels up, some days he feels down, he says. The weather, getting used to his new neighbours, and the stress of living low-income — all of these have an effect on his moods.

Moving on up

"I feel more positive about myself. I'm more sure of myself. I feel more personable towards myself.... I think of myself as someone who actually deserves to be respected, which — that's kind of foreign territory to me."

Stephen Chalmers, who says he is proud that by sharing his story publicly, he has become someone people approach for advice about how to seek help.

Police dogs. More than just partners in (fighting) crime

LEAH GERMAIN
Metro reporter

Quanto CONTRIBUTED

Adam Segin is at a crossroads.

As a constable with the Edmonton police canine unit, Segin and his partner Storm have worked as a team for almost seven years — a year shy of retirement.

I first met Segin and his German shepherd while I was researching a followup article on Quanto, an Edmonton police dog killed on duty in 2013. I was inspired by Quanto's story and the partnership between handler and service dog. It was a special bond.

For Segin, it's a bond he's been developing since Storm was seven weeks old.

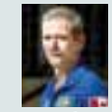
"That's the hardest part for me right now," Segin said. "He is eight years old and the last year has been kind of challenging.... (The job) is so much wear and tear on their joints, hips, knees and back."

Segin's boss said canine unit members have spent a good chunk of their careers training to be handlers, which can make it especially hard for them to leave and retire their dogs.

Metro's choice

Starman blows our minds

HENRIETTA WALMARK
Metro copy editor



Commander's log — stardate: 04-12-2013: "Here am I floating in my tin can/A last glimpse of the world/Planet Earth is blue and there's nothing left to do."

Few events in 2013 eclipsed Chris Hadfield's cover of David Bowie's Space Oddity. The video of the astronaut floating in his "tin can" as he sang his farewell to life aboard the International Space Station capped an extraordinary mission of firsts. As the ISS orbited Earth, he tweeted stunning photos of the planet, chatted with William Shatner, shared videos of science experiments, and performed an interspace duet.

Hadfield was having the time of his life, and took us along for the ride. But what's really cool is what's been left trailing in the stardust. Hadfield allowed me and millions of others to experience the universe as never before, sparking our imagination and reigniting interest in the final frontier as a space worth exploring.

†Offer good while supplies last and cannot be combined with any other promotion. The "Total of All Payments" does not include applicable sales taxes or optional fees and other charges (such as late charges) that you may incur. Advertised rental rates and terms are for new merchandise. Promo valid in Canada only. Advertised rates valid 12/2/13 – 12/31/13. Product availability may vary by store. Free or reduced rent offers will not reduce total rent or purchase/option amounts. You will not own the merchandise until the total amount necessary to acquire ownership is paid in full or you exercise your early purchase option. Ownership is optional. Offer good while supplies last and cannot be combined with any other promotion. See Store Manager for complete details. **To restart an agreement on a returned product, Rent-A-Centre will obtain your payment records for two years. Thereafter, simply bring in your last payment receipt for reinstatement. Delivery and set-up are included and RAC services and maintains the merchandise while on rent. Set-up does not include connection of gas appliances. Trademarks, registered trademarks and/or service marks, indicated or otherwise, are the properties of their respective owners.

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Readers' online selections

Sex parties? Nose picking? What is this, you ask? Well, it's what you told us — via our Metropolitan Panel — were your favourite Metro online national news stories of the year

University 'sex party' at adult club proceeds

After a "slightly overwhelming" few days of publicity in early 2013, the University of Toronto Sexual Education Centre decided to go-ahead with its "Sexy Social" at Oasis Aqua Lounge, a club that bills itself as a water-themed adult playground. The event, organized for its sexual awareness week, was dubbed an "epic student sex club adventure" by organizers — and labelled as an orgy on a Reddit post. The groups co-ordinator, Dylan Tower, said the party was not an orgy — just a safe introduction to Toronto's sex club scene. "It's very much, come and enjoy the space, there's no prodding or pushing in that direction," he said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

T.O. man's call for stem-cell donations

In July, Chris Taylor of Toronto called on healthy 17- to 35-year-olds to become stem-cell donors. "I need one, it turns out, to save my life," he told Metro. "More importantly, it's for everyone who needs one." OneMatch is a program run by Canadian Blood Services that matches potential stem-cell donors to unrelated patients. Donors sign up for free and get a package in the mail containing a swab kit.

METRO

Nose pickers, rejoice

If you don't like gross things, this story is snot for you. An associate professor of biochemistry at the University of Saskatchewan is trying to get more students interested in science by looking at the health benefits of picking your nose and eating it. Scott Napper says mucous traps germs and stops them from getting into our body, but if we consume that mucous, it could help train our immune system by exposing it to the germs.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/CKOM

New rules for Canuck drivers

In early 2012, this came in from the department of red tape you didn't know existed: Canadians were required by law to have an international driving permit in addition to their regular licences when driving in Florida. The new law applied to any non-resident, but has since been unanimously repealed by legislators.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Readers' + Metro's choice

Teen-trafficking case lacked outrage

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
Metro reporter

Three girls ran away from a group home last year, lured away by a prostitution ring and put to work in Toronto.

The girls were in the care of the province when they were trafficked. When the story broke, strangely, there was no public outrage.

I called up critics of both opposition parties and neither knew much. The Ministry of Child and Youth Services simply said after the criminal trial that safety would be "enhanced."

I talked to Bridget Perrier, who was prostituted from her group home at age 12. Now, she is calling on the provincial government to acquire "a deep understanding" of how the sex trade involves girls in the child welfare system.

I agree. I'd also like to hear some promises about how it will never happen again.

Gentlemen, start your engines.

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Rehtaeh taught me about respect

Rehtaeh's mother Leah Parsons. METRO FILE

HALEY RYAN
Metro reporter

More than eight months after Rehtaeh Parsons took her own life, I still think of a sentence her mother said to me just a couple days after her daughter's death.

I sat down with Leah Parsons in April, after she invited me into her Cole Harbour, N.S., home to hear about what kind of person Rehtaeh was, before and after the alleged rape that happened at a party when she was 15, in 2011.

"Rehtaeh's everywhere here," Parsons said with a sad smile as she looked around at the photos of her daughter lining the walls.

Interviewing someone who has suffered a major loss is intimidating because you want to do their loved one justice, but as I talked with Leah I realized listening and respect was all she needed.

I knew sharing Rehtaeh's story was the best way I could respect her memory and help her family. Parsons' said her daughter had been a headstrong, busy woman, passionate about animal rights.

Showing compassion

"Don't jump on the victim, help the victim."

Said Leah Parsons, Rehtaeh Parson's mother. Her daughter's story has become synonymous with bullying and has helped create legislation which criminalizes the distribution of intimate photos without consent.

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Retail offers not combinable with any CPA/GPC or Daily Rental incentives, the Commercial Upfit Program or the Commercial Fleet Incentive Program (CFIP). ▲ Between December 16 – 29, 2013, receive 0% APR purchase financing on new 2014 Ford models (excluding C-MAX, Mustang Shelby and BOSS 302, Flex, Explorer, Expedition, Transit Connect, E-Series, F-150 Regular Cab XL 4x2 (Value Leader), F-75 to F-550, and medium truck) for up to 60 months, to qualified retail customers, on approved credit (OAC) from Ford Credit. Not all buyers will qualify for the lowest interest rate. Example: $25,000 purchase financed at 0% APR for 48/60/72 months, monthly payment is $520.83/$416.66/$347.22, cost of borrowing is $0 or APR of 0% and total to be repaid is $25,000. 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All prices are based on Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price. ^Until January 31, 2014, receive (4.49%) / (2.49%/1.99%) APR purchase financing on new 2013 (F-150 Super Cab XLT 4x4 5.0L / F-150 Super Crew XLT 4x4 5.0L) / 2014 (Fusion S/ Escape S) models for up to (72)/(84) months to qualified customers, on approved credit (OAC) from Ford Credit. Not all buyers will qualify for the lowest interest rate. Get the above for ($26,999/$29,349) / ($32,499/$32,999) purchase financed at (4.49%) / (2.49%/1.99%) APR for (72)/(84) months, with ($0)/($0) down payment, monthly payment is ($428/$427) /($385/$394) after delivery allowance of ($9,250)/ ($0/$750), (the sum of twelve (12) monthly payments divided by 26 periods gives payee a bi-weekly payment of ($396/$396) / ($0/$505)), interest cost of borrowing is ($3,889/$4,259)/($2,809/$3,591) or APR of (4.49%/4.49%) / (2.49%/1.99%) and total to be repaid is ($30,888/$34,808) / ($34,590/$34,590)). Down payment may be required based on approved credit from Ford Credit. All purchase finance offers exclude freight and air tax ($1,300) license, fuel fill charge, insurance, dealer PDI, registration, PPSA, administration fee, any environmental charges or fees, and all applicable taxes. Taxes are payable on the full amount of the purchase price. All prices are based on Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price. Delivery Allowances are not combinable with any fleet consumer incentives. **Offer only valid from December 3, 2013 to January 31, 2014 (the "Offer Period") to resident Canadians with an eligible Costco membership on or before November 30, 2013 who purchase or lease of a new 2013/2014 Ford (excluding Fiesta, Focus, C-Max, Raptor, GT500, Mustang Boss 302, Transit Connect EV, and Medium Truck) or Lincoln vehicle (each an "Eligible Vehicle"). Limit one (1) offer per each Eligible Vehicle purchase or lease, up to a maximum of two (2) separate Eligible Vehicle sales per Costco Membership Number. Offer is transferable to persons domiciled with an eligible Costco member. Applicable taxes calculated before ($405.000) offer is deducted. †† Claim based on analysis by Ford of Polk global new registrations for CY2012 for a single nameplate which excludes unbadged vehicles, platform derivatives or other vehicle nameplate versions. + Based on R. L. Polk Canada, Inc. Total New Registration data for Full Size Pickups per Ford Segmentation as of YTD September 30, 2013. ~~Estimated fuel consumption ratings for the 2013 (F-150 4X4 5.0L V8 6-Speed Auto) / 2014 (Focus S 2.0L I4 6-Speed Auto/Fusion SE 2.5L - I4/Escape S FWD 1.6L GTDI-I4). Fuel consumption ratings based on Transport Canada-approved test methods. Actual fuel consumption will vary based on road conditions, vehicle loading and driving habits. ® Registered trademark of Price Costco International, Inc. used under license. ©2013 Sirius Canada Inc. "SiriusXM", the SiriusXM logo, channel names and logos are trademarks of SiriusXM Radio Inc. and are used under license. ©2013 Ford Motor Company of Canada, Limited. All rights reserved.

City's roads became rivers

ROBSON FLETCHER
Metro reporter

Standing at a downtown street corner, thigh-deep in brown water, I snapped one of my favourite photos of the Calgary flood. A man was trudging through the road-turned-river, with the flood-ravaged Saddledome in the background behind him. The image, to me, summed up just how far Calgary's rivers had encroached into the heart of the city. Then I realized I had better get the heck out of there.

Empathy

Bosma murder not just 'a story'

STEPHEN BALDWIN
Metro copy editor

The disappearance and murder of Tim Bosma was for me a reminder that we're all susceptible to becoming front-page stories. The 32-year-old Ancaster, Ont., man vanished after taking two men for a test drive in a truck he was selling.

The news that typically makes it to Metro's pages can often be devastating enough to elicit our sympathy, but rarely our empathy. As hard as we try, it's not easy to imagine ourselves in war-torn or hurricane-ravaged cities.

Anyone who has had to trust a stranger can relate to Bosma's situation. And the words of his wife, Sharlene Bosma, made the story even more real for me.

"Yesterday was the most horrifying day of my life and people tell me I have been so strong, and all I know is that I have a beautiful two-year-old girl at home who now needs her mommy more than ever and needs her mommy to hold it together, so I know that I cannot fall apart."

This was a heartbreaking loss for a young family, and my hope is that it forces people not to fear or distrust, but to view these stories not just as stories, but as personal experiences.

Reporter's bottle-cap story goes viral

Business blunder.
Vitamin Water bottle cap reading "You Retard" is among this year's top corporate gaffes

CANDICE WARD
Metro freelancer

While Blake Loates — who discovered the now-infamous "You Retard" bottle cap on the top of a bottle of Vitamin Water (a Coca-Cola product) back in September in Edmonton — has been satisfied with the outcome of the ordeal and has moved on, the story still seems to be making headlines as one of the worst Canadian business blunders of 2013.

As a journalist, it was exciting to see a story I help to uncover go viral and facilitate positive change within a major corporation, but it was also difficult to watch the toll the story was taking on the family.

Like Loates, I was unprepared for the story to go international so quickly, with major news outlets from around the world picking it up.

When stories like this one become viral, people tend to take to the web with their opinions — some supportive and others not so supportive.

Loates was never out for media attention (as I had approached her for the story), 15 minutes of fame or financial gain. She merely sought awareness to the pain the word could cause.

The famous Vitamin Water bottle cap. LUCY HAINES/FOR METRO IN EDMONTON

Sheer madness.

Lululemon is stretching its customers' patience

MELISSA DUNNE
Copy editor

Bent over, hands touching toes, I swivelled to get a good look in the changing-room mirror.

This is not the kind of bending and stretching I usually do in my $98 Lululemon pants.

The Luxtreme tights (not part of the recall last March) were almost as thin as pantyhose, my underwear clearly visible.

The clothing behemoth had cattily suggested the sheerness was caused by women squeezing their fat butts into too-small pants. So I went up a size, then another size. The bottoms were now loose and baggy … and still see-through.

I told a store "educator" about this, only to be snottily informed that "It's the nature of the fabric."

It seems it's in the nature of the athletic-clothing empire to stretch its customers' patience. From the top on down, the response to the sheer-pants recall has been sheer madness.

Acting like a snobby, reed-thin, peroxide-blond yogi has been a core part of Lululemon's practice for too long.

It's time for the new leadership to be the one twisting and bending for its devoted customer base. If not, this Lulu addict will have to find a store that accepts a woman with (gasp) thighs that sometimes rub together.

An instructor, centre, conducts a yoga class while dressed in Lululemon clothes. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Horsemeat

Do we really know what we're eating?

MIKE SPEERS
Associate managing editor, night production

Every once in a while, a news story pops up that makes you pause and reflect. Whether posing moral questions or highlighting an existential dilemma, these types of stories give our brains a much-needed shakeup.

No story better exemplifies this than the horsemeat scandal, where meat of the equus genus was passed off as high-quality beef. On the surface, this may seem like a rather unimportant story; after all, no one died or even got sick. In fact, horsemeat is quite safe, and still eaten by many people today.

But what made it so important to me was that it forced us as consumers to stop and think about what we feed ourselves and our families. What exactly is in that ground beef? Is that pork from a pig that was fed antibiotics?

These are not questions I ask very frequently, but the horsemeat scandal made me realize that I should.

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Call 511 for road conditions. You can also find road information online at **MB511.ca**; mobile device users can use **manitoba.ca**. Road closures are available on twitter **@MBGovRoads** or by email subscription.

**NEVER USE 511 WHEN DRIVING.
HAVE A PASSENGER MAKE THE CALL OR
PULL OVER AND PARK BEFORE CALLING 511.**

Manitoba

International

From strange to serious — the world was a fascinating and sometimes heartbreaking place in 2013.

Readers' online selections

Nothing hard-hitting here: Metro online readers gravitated towards a tiny penis contest, a giant toilet clog and a lion-like dog on the loose as their favourite international stories of 2013, as picked through our Metropolitan Panel

Interview with a Smallest Penis contest winner

Meet Nick Gilronan: the winner of the Smallest Penis in Brooklyn. Gilronan entered the contest held in Kings County Bar in Brooklyn, N.Y. in August and came out on top despite the, uhh, stiff competition.
Anyway, you guys couldn't get enough of Metro's Q & A with this guy. **METRO WORLD NEWS**

'Fatberg' discovered in suburban sewer

Sure, it may have looked like an iceberg, but there was nothing cool about it. Utility company Thames Water said in August it has discovered what it calls the biggest "fatberg" ever recorded in Britain – a 15-ton blob of congealed fat and baby wipes lodged in a sewer drain. That's enough "wrongly flushed festering food fat mixed with wet wipes" to fill a double-decker bus such as the famous London Routemaster, the company said. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Dog shaved like lion prompts 911 call

A dog that has been shaved to look like a lion set off a panic in Norfolk, Va. in January. Three 911 calls came in on the same day reporting a lion wandering the streets. It's "roaming loose in the neighbourhood a few blocks from the zoo," one caller reported to the 911 dispatcher at 10:19 a.m. After the 911 calls, Norfolk police called the Virginia Zoo to make sure its lions were all accounted for. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

MSN Messenger goes the way of ICQ

Microsoft's venerable Messenger program was moved to the great big recycling bin in the sky this year.
Users had until March 15 to migrate their accounts over to Skype, which the software company acquired in 2011.
At its peak, Messenger boasted 300 million users in more than 60 countries.
Microsoft will continue Messenger in China, due to the peculiar nature of the Chinese market. **METRO**

Dog with human-like face gets hundreds of adoption offers

Tonik the dog became an international sensation when a photo of him was picked up by media around the globe. "His pictures have been up on the adoption site since September 2011," said Schwartz. "For some reason, someone decided this week that he looks like a human and it's been overwhelming since," said Jen Schwartz, the founder and owner of the Homeward Bound Animal Shelter, at the time of the buzz. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

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Egypt

'An uncertain reality'

DEENA DOUARA
Metro copy editor

Calls to relatives in Egypt are reminders that while the deteriorating state of affairs — of people's spirits and dreams and savings — is frustrating to behold from here, it's an uncertain reality, a nightmare, over there.

I was there this summer, in the lead-up to the anniversary of then-president Mohammed Morsi's inauguration. I tried to understand the arguments: why Egyptians must protest, call for legal processes, stay home and give him a fair chance.
I tried to capture that atmosphere for Metro, on TV and for Huffington Post, all garnering strong reactions. As protests intensified, so did people's rhetoric. A prevalent "You're with us or with the terrorists" approach took root, serving to justify military crackdowns and delegitimizing nuanced opinions that didn't conform neatly to pro-military or pro-Muslim Brotherhood.

The 2011 revolution was one of the most dramatic scenes Egyptians witnessed in at least three decades.

An Egyptian woman reacts in Tahrir Square the day after former Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, was ousted from power on July 4, 2013 in Cairo.
ED GILES/GETTY IMAGES FILE

There was uncertainty and disagreement and plenty of anger. I believe 2013 really changed Egyptians. Mistrust, contempt, revenge, hatred: These sentiments are relatively new, and they are frightening.

As repression, imprisonment and censorship have seemingly increased alongside an ever-declining economy, Egyptians now must too fear their neighbours. And divided, they say, is how they fall.

Syria. Keeping an eye out

ALI ZAFAR
Metro copy editor

Nearly three years later, the Arab Spring has morphed into a disgruntled winter in Syria. While several Arab nations have toppled their dictators, Syria continues to be stuck between rebel strongholds and leader Bashar al-Assad.

Bearing the wrath of this power struggle are the citizens of the country. Around two million of them have been displaced and Amnesty International estimates that more than 100,000 people have been killed since the conflict started in March 2011.

I've seen atrocities committed both in the name of religion and by iron-fist rulers while living in the Middle East and South Asia, which is why the plight of Syrians is something I can relate to. Being considered a religious minority in Pakistan, I can empathize with the woes of religious minorities in Syria, worried about their country under the control of Islamist rebels. It's why I'll keep a close eye on stories coming out of Syria in 2014.

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Voices This is rare. Three Metro columnists are asked to write about their most memorable work this year. Turns out it can't be done without your feedback.

MY ONE LONG YEAR

JUST SAYIN'

Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Even though asking me to choose a favourite column is like asking me to proclaim a public preference for my goldfish over my hamster, I have dutifully reviewed Just Sayin' for the past year, and it turns out I have a lot to say, which might surprise a few people.

But I've managed to narrow it down.

Generally, I try to communicate my total bemusement with contemporary life. It's the best of times. It's the worst of times. It's the weirdest of times, right?

That makes for lots of material, such as:

CONTRIBUTED

Multi-billionaire Amazon's Jeff Bezos was in the news this year for buying the fabled Washington Post of Woodward and Bernstein fame for the equivalent of billionaire pocket lint: $250 million.

That's less, by the way, than what the Qatar Royal family paid for Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne's The Card Players — $259 million.

(Big deal. I paid $2.59 for The Card Players at the neighbourhood garage sale. I really love the look on the bulldog's face.)

ISTOCK IMAGES

Then there are those columns that are memorable for some really great bits, such as the one about the one-way expedition to Mars that was signing up potential colonists earlier this year:

"Therefore Mars One is looking for a special kind of person. Someone who is nuts enough to spend the rest of his or her life stuck in a climate-controlled hut the size of a portable toilet but well adjusted enough not to try to eat his or her fellow castaways."

What writing!

Of course, you can't write a column these days without having your own online anvil chorus, and I managed to hit a sour note writing about people who don't wear enough clothes on the beach. My protest went along aesthetic lines, not skin care, and the mob that formed outside my virtual door was not happy.

Here's just a taste: "Holy crap this is arguably the most ignorant thing I've ever read in my life."

You can't please all of the people all of the time, but if you try really hard, you can annoy all of the people all of the time.

Fortunately, I did manage to get an online standing O for a column I wrote about a movement to ban tipping that's just getting off the ground in New York and Chicago. One reader, named Crystal, gave me some unordinary positive feedback: "I don't usually write in to comment on articles of any sort, but after reading your brief article I had to say, very well written, entertaining, all the while thought-provoking. Excellent!"

Thanks, Crystal, I needed that. As you can tell, it's been a long year.

Reader writes

"After reading your brief article I had to say, very well written, entertaining, all the while thought-provoking." Crystal

2013 is over and I'm left holding the (mail)bag

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
readers@metronews.ca

ISTOCK IMAGES

I've been told to pick one favourite 2013 column and reminisce, but my columns are like my children and once they're out in the world I will deny they are mine.

Instead, let's open the mailbag. After a year of columnastic genius I feel it's important for readers to provide a fresh perspective on how wonderful I am. For instance, one fan recently sent me a Facebook message that said my columns are "desperately TRYING to be funny. Alas, they just come off juvenile." To hear my work is desperately funny, yet childlike, is wonderful. I clicked on her page to thank her and learned she's graduated from "I didn't finish (2008)," which signals a level of brash independence and attention to detail I think we can all emulate. Under professional skills it said, "crack-smoking," which means she will soon be a writer (if she's joking) or the mayor of a large city (if she's not).

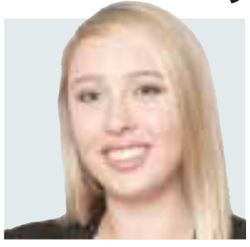
Mail moment

"Stupid yellow journalism at it's finest!!!" Online Fan

Another reader let me know my column is "pure dribble." I briefly assumed it was an insult and he had misspelled 'drivel.' Then I realized it was a basketball-related compliment, and that he considers me the Michael Jordan of Metro columnists. Pure, unadulterated dribble. Swish.

Some other actual mailbag highlights: * "Hypocrit much?" (More than you. I add an 'e.') * "Do your research." (No.) * "Stupid yellow journalism at it's finest!!!" (There are numerous problems here, but they are amply overcome by the use of three exclamation points. Bravo.) And that's the 2013 mailbag. See you next year, readers — older, but not wiser!!!

I swear, and I am a girl



SHE SAYS

Jessica Napier
@MetroSheSays

As 2013 comes to a close, it's fun to look back at some of the memorable columns I've written over the course of the year. Back in June, I wrote a piece about swearing in public. I described how my boyfriend and I had been reprimanded by an overbearing parent at a neighbouring table after dropping a few expletives during a Sunday brunch.

From the inbox

"I am saddened when I hear a young person, especially a young girl, making a public reference to parts of their body and their knowledge of sexual activity with obscenities."
Anonymous reader

I was hardly advocating for an uncivilized society full of foul-mouthed brutes, but the column definitely struck a nerve among our readers.

I received a few letters from people who identified swearing in public as a generational problem. One gentleman wrote an email stating, "I am saddened when I hear a young person, especially a young girl, making a public reference to parts of their body and their knowledge of sexual activity with obscenities."

I understand the importance of good manners, but I take offence to this notion that I should suppress any behaviour that is deemed 'unladylike' according to a 1950s standard.

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The good, the bad and the ugly

Year in review. The beginning of a new year, like the opening of a new film, holds so much promise... It's time for Metro to screen 2013's crop

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

It's time to bid farewell to 2013 with a look at the most disappointing films of the year.

Pacific Rim
Giant robots! Fighting giant sea monsters! Directed by Guillermo del Toro! This could've been so good, and obviously we thought it would be, but the results were just… not so much.

Only God Forgives
Maybe Nicholas Winding Refn was punishing people for liking his fantastic "Drive" too much, but this art-house meditation on masculinity, violence and retribution — we think? — was just a slog.

Star Trek Into Darkness
We might have been less disappointed in this long-awaited sequel if J.J. Abrams had just come out and said from the get-go that Benedict Cumberbatch was playing Khan. If only that were the only problem with it, though.

Jack the Giant Killer
Maybe it was foolish to expect Bryan Singer to do something cool and interesting with the old Jack and the Beanstalk fairy tale, but this one just fell flat.

Oldboy
Spike Lee's plodding, uninspired remake of Park Chan-wook's 2003 cult classic at least makes a strong case for renting the original. Some things don't translate well, apparently.

Lovelace
A lot of foreplay that led to not very much of anything else, this exploration of the woman behind Deep Throat held too much back.

The Fifth Estate
Maybe it was too soon to explore the rise and fall of WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange, but it seemed perfectly reasonable that Bill Condon and Benedict Cumberbatch were up to the task. Apparently not.

Director Guillermo del Toro really dropped the ball on Pacific Rim — a movie that promised so much and delivered so little. CONTRIBUTED

We asked and you let us know that Gravity was your top movie pick for 2013. CONTRIBUTED

Metro's picks

1. Gravity
2. Blue Jasmine
3. 12 Years A Slave
4. Hunger Games
5. Dallas Buyers Club

Metro pick

American Hustle

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

American Hustle's story of flim flam men and women, the FBI and a real life sting known as Abscam has emerged as my favourite movie of 2013. It's an entertainingly audacious movie that will doubtless be compared to The Wolf of Wall Street because of the similarity in tone and themes, but this time around director David O. Russell has almost out-Scorsese'd Martin Scorsese. Add to that unexpected and compelling performances from the a-list ensemble cast—Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner, Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence — and it adds up to the most fun I had at the movies this year.

Reader's pick

What do you think? We recently polled Metro readers to see what film they considered to be the best of 2013. Gravity was the winner, hands down.

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Metro's turn-up and tune-out in 2013

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Metro's picks

Metro's picks for top five songs

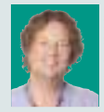
- **1.** Get Lucky, by Daft Punk
- **2.** Reflektor and Afterlife, by Arcade Fire
- **3.** Black Skinhead, by Kanye West
- **4.** Royals, by Lorde
- **5.** Thrift Shop, by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis

No lines blurred in this selection

As a shameless Jay Z super fan, I want to say 2013's top song was Holy Grail featuring Justin Timberlake. But even I can't deny this year belonged to Blurred Lines by Robin Thicke featuring Pharrell Williams and T.I. A simplistic hook and its blend of R&B and pop helped the infectious Blurred Lines hold top spot on charts around the world. It also created its share of controversy (think music video with prancing topless supermodels and Thicke preemptively suing Marvin Gaye's family). Love it or hate it, at some point (maybe in a drunken stupor if you're a certain mayor) you likely caught yourself singing, "OK, now he was close, tried to domesticate ya..." IZABELA SZYDLO, METRO

Metro picks

Song of the Year: Royals by Lorde



SOUND CHECK
Alan Cross
scene@metronews.ca

Talk about a song with universal appeal! What began as a track marketed to the alternative set has become the biggest cross-format hit in years.

This is largely due to what was left out of Royals. It would have been so easy (and tempting!) to mess up the song by over-producing it. Instead, there's an elegant simplicity to everything: an understated rhythm track and the barest hint of a bass line. Lorde's vocals do the rest. The song doesn't even contain a bridge. This is brilliant songwriting, an excellent performance and perfect production, all wrapped in one great song.

Crossover appeal lands Lorde at the top of Alan Cross's list. HANDOUT

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HBO's Game belongs only on the Throne

TV. Whether you binge watched or faithfully tuned in, there were a number of great shows this year. Metro weighs in on what was tube-worthy in 2013

The shocking Red Wedding episode of Game of Thrones made Metro's list of the best of 2013. HANDOUT

Alexandra Cavallo, our TV correspondent from south of the border, gives us her picks for the best shows on TV, however you may watch TV.

Game of Thrones
Game of Thrones had the best season ever. What other show has the balls to ruthlessly — and awesomely, creatively and bloodily — kill off multiple main characters like it ain't no thing? Game of Thrones reigns supreme. See what I did there?

House of Cards
Other than HBO (and FX and A&E and — well, damn, seems like television is killing it lately, huh?) Netflix is putting out some of the most exciting and game-changing programs. House of Cards — to put it simply — is utterly captivating, and this comes from a person, who, I admit it, doesn't even vote. Politics is not my thing. But this show has it all: intrigue, sex, violence, scandal and Kevin Spacey. Enough said.

Project Runway
Here's my shout-out to reality TV. I love reality it. I watch it all. Housewives, teen moms, geriatric moms, people who have sex with inanimate objects — I'll watch them all, as long as it's "real." But Project Runway (technically a reality competition show, which makes it higher brow) is legitimately a quality show. The contestants (for the most part) are actually astoundingly talented, the challenges are fresh and exciting, and there's still enough cat fighting and drama to sate my appetite for lowbrow reality crap.

Girls
How did nobody else even mention this show? I don't care what anybody says, Lena Dunham is a genius and remarkably likeable despite airing her flaws — both emotional and physical — for the whole world to gawk at. Sure, the second season didn't quite meet the very high bar that the debut season set — it was a little too dark, and sometimes depressing — but as a 20-something girl myself (29 still counts) I can totally relate to almost everything that is said and done on this show. Don't judge me.

Nathan For You
Most people have probably never seen or even heard of this show. Get familiar, people, because Canadian comedian Nathan Fielder is one of the funniest dudes on the tube right now. This docu-reality comedy series basically features Fielder playing a deadpan, dead-eyed version of himself, using his "business background" to help out failing companies and individuals.

Spoiler alert: He is not helpful. Trust me, you've got to watch it.

ALEXANDRA CAVALLO/MWN

Metro's picks

1. Breaking Bad comes to an end
2. Toronto Mayor Rob Ford is lampooned on every major late night talk show and Saturday Night Live
3. The murder-filled Red Wedding episode of Game of Thrones shocks viewers not familiar with the book series.
4. Arrested Development returns to TV via Netflix
5. Netflix series House of Cards becomes the first web TV show to receive major Primetime Emmy Award nominations, and goes on to win in three categories.

Final eight episodes

Breaking Bad: The final curtain

In mid 2013 the final eight episodes of the ultra-popular and critically acclaimed series Breaking Bad went on air. As usual Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul turned in stellar performances and creator Vince Gilligan ensured the climactic episodes did not disappoint. We join the second half of the final season with Hank finally realizing that Walt is the infamous meth kingpin Heisenberg.

This riveting show draws to a close with eight suspense-filled episodes. We see Jesse team up with Hank to catch Walt, Todd's ruthless relatives committing horrible deeds and Walter, in conflict with his family and on the run, tying up as many loose ends as he can. Viewers were rewarded for their loyalty with a brilliantly crafted and gradual ending to this Ned Flanders-turned-Scarface story. As the screen faded to the sound of Baby Blue I realized we may never see the likes of it again. Pure Genius. EOIN WELDON/METRO

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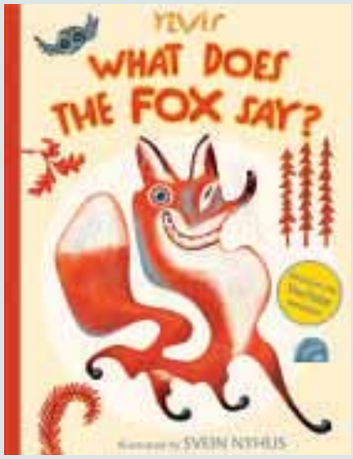
The 2013 cyber heights of cyberspace

Metro's picks

1 Chris Hadfield's out-of-this-world version of Space Oddity inspired many. Kris Abel walks you through his blast off into the collective consciousness.

2 Norwegian comedy group Ylves' video for What Does the Fox Say? was YouTube's top video of the year, and has even spawned an illustrated book.



3 Amanda Bynes' 2013 tweets left many of us scratching out heads — and just shocked.

4 Felix Baumgartner's freefall from the edge of space.

5 Patrick Stewart's tweets left an impression on anyone within a half mile of Twitter this year. Read what we have to say about them on this page.

A Canadian star was born

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
scene@metronews.ca

Chris Hadfield won the Internet this year with a viral hit that was anything but accidental. He evoked the beauty of our world by sharing how difficult it was to leave its orbital view. These are complex emotions that he somehow captured with an iPad recording of himself singing David Bowie's Space Oddity. His Space Station video lessons and tweeted photos revealed a master communicator who understands the web better than anyone. Through him we have an extraordinary connection to space exploration, but also an example of how a cynical web culture can embrace values that are sophisticated and sincere.

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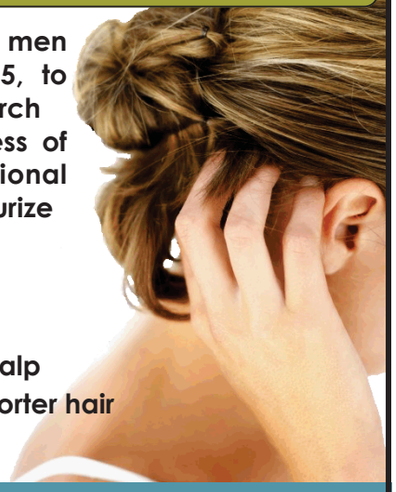

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Another kind of fame

Getting high off Patrick's personality

Making memes from Patrick Stewart's many starring movie roles is nothing new for those who lurk the intertubes. But when his fiancé posted a video of an allegedly stoned Stewart giving her acting lessons on the art of the quadruple take, the Internet's collective head caught a contact high. The powerful hit lasted throughout the year as Reddit and its kind obsessed over all things Stewart. From the serious (Stewart speaking about his own experiences with domestic violence) to the silly (him climbing into a bathtub dressed as a lobster), the former captain of the Star Trek Enterprise was sailing nothing but the good ship Awesome in 2013. **METRO**

Patrick Stewart, here with Ian McKellen, showed us a side of him we'd never seen before.
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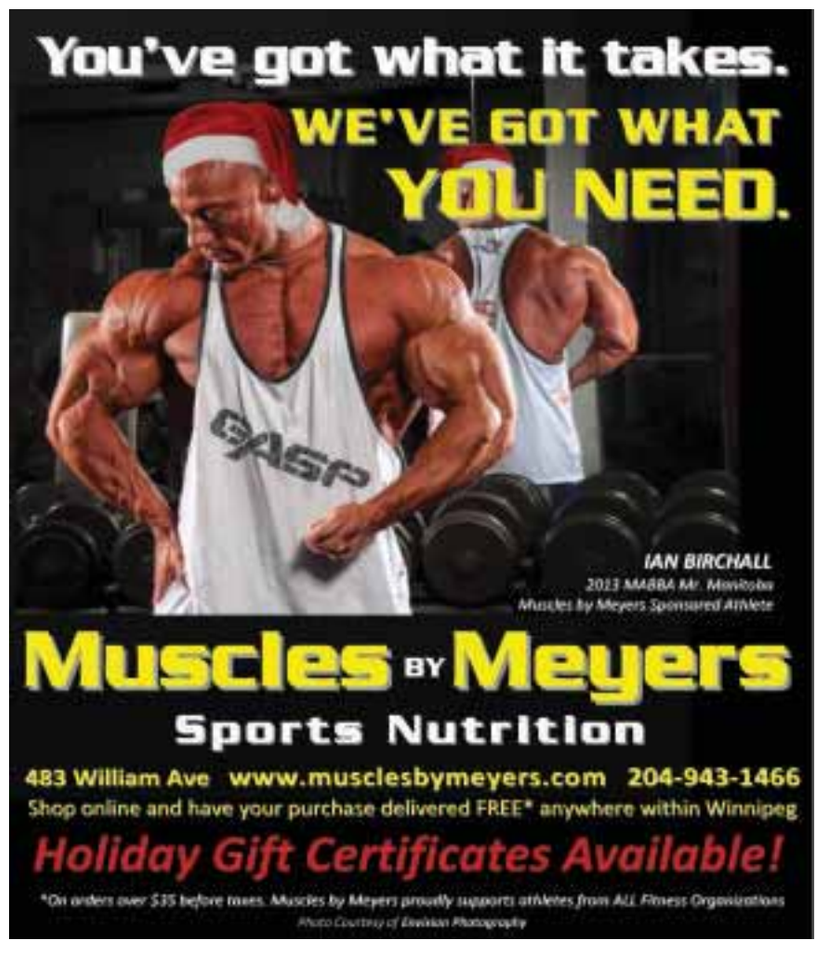
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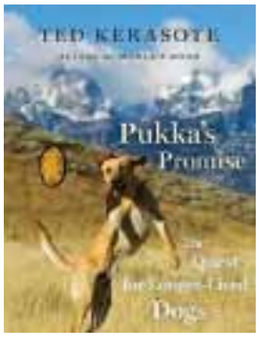
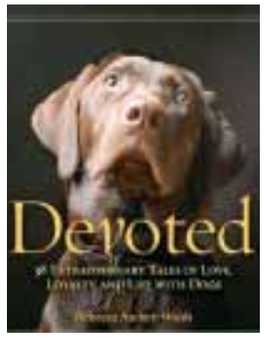
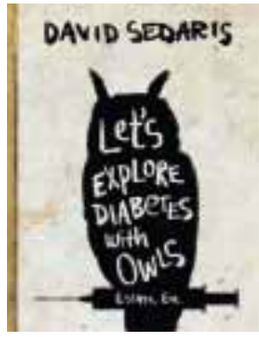
What writers were reading this year

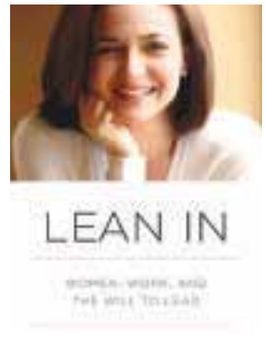
Publishing. Authors Teresa Rhyne and Emily Giffin share their top book picks of 2013

EMILY LAURENCE
Metro World News









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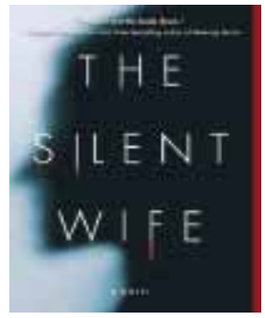

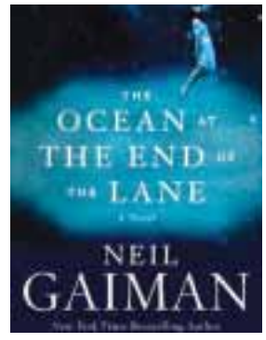

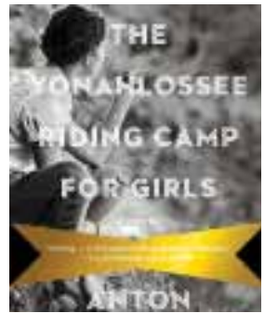

It's hard for a first-time author to surpass the bold-faced names typically seen on the New York Times best-seller lists, but that's exactly what Teresa Rhyne did with her book The Dog Lived (And So Will I). Her memoir about adopting a dog with cancer inspired millions. So, what books impacted Rhyne in 2013? She shares her top non-fiction picks below.

1. Pukka's Promise: The Quest For Longer-Lived Dogs, by Ted Kerasote
I'm a lifetime dog-lover and yet this book made me rethink how I live with my dogs and what more I can do for their health and welfare, and that was no easy task. Plus, Ted can spin a great tale (tail?) and that's not easy, either.

2. The Imperfect Environmentalist, by Sara Gilbert
This is a practical guide to clearing your body, detoxing your home and saving the Earth — without losing your mind — by actress Sara Gilbert. I've had two dogs fight cancer and I'm a cancer survivor myself, so this year I was all about detoxing our environment. This book became my go-to reference, particularly because of her Cut to the Chase Hippie: What's the Least I Need to Know advice section on every topic — perfect.

3. Devoted: 38 Extraordinary Tales of Love, Loyalty, and Life With Dogs, by Rebecca Ascher-Walsh
I'm a sucker for a beautiful dog book, and this one comes with touching stories about the many ways dogs are better than we are.

4. Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls, by David Sedaris
Because David Sedaris. Enough said.

5. Lean In, by Sheryl Sandberg
Lean In is thought-provoking, fascinating and depressing. (What have I done with my life?!) It's about as highbrow as I went in 2013.

International best-selling author Emily Giffin knows a thing or two about what makes a good page-turner. Her first book, Something Borrowed, was made into a movie starring Kate Hudson and Ginnifer Goodwin, and her subsequent five novels have been lauded both here and abroad. Giffin, whose seventh novel, The One and Only, comes out in May 2014, shares her favourite fiction books of the year with us.

1. The Silent Wife, by A.S.A. Harrison
This is a gripping, intelligent thriller about a marriage on the verge of collapse and a woman at her breaking point. It's gorgeously written and impossible to put down. A sad footnote: The author passed away just before the book's publication.

2. Sisterland, by Curtis Sittenfeld
Sisterland is a moving and complex emotional study of twin sisters born with mild ESP. Curtis Sittenfeld is one of my favorite authors. As a mother of identical twins, I found this story especially fascinating.

3. The Ocean At The End Of The Lane, by Neil Gaiman
This story is a beautiful but bewitching fairy tale of magic and memory. The novel is very unlike my usual reads, but my sister convinced me to give it a chance. She was right — it's hauntingly delicious.

4. The Yonahlossee Riding Camp For Girls by Anton DiSclafani
I have always been drawn to coming-of-age stories, and this novel is a true gem among them. Set during the Depression at an equestrian boarding school, DiSclafani's debut is that rare combination of understated elegance and explosive drama.

5. Wonder by R.J. Palacio
Wonder is about a 10-year-old boy who was born with extreme facial anomalies. I read it aloud to my three children, and it touched us all profoundly. It's not only my favorite book of the year, but also of all time — right up there with To Kill A Mockingbird.

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Who won the battle of the baby names?

Traditional vs plain old weird. Some of the most popular monikers of the year came, not surprisingly, from celebrities

IT'S ALL RELATIVE
Kathy Buckworth
Kathybuckworth.com

Every year, the most popular baby names list is announced, and I think most parents prefer not to see their child's name turn up there.

It might be because they want to "own" that name and be individual, or they are thinking about confusion in the classroom in later years. I personally know about 117 Jennifers, clearly a No. 1 name in the '70s.

While I didn't name my kids to stand out, I didn't specifically choose names I hoped would be super popular either.

I'm a Kathy; growing up in the '60s and '70s there were always more than a few of us, even if some of them spelled it incorrectly with a "C."

As for my husband, I think every second guy my age that I know has his name (Steve), including my own brother.

Steve has also been the name of choice for a monkey in both the movie Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs, as well as in the Spot the Dog books, and even the titular hedge in the movie Over the Hedge.

My kids giggle at the thought of a newborn baby named Steve. "This is my new baby, STEVE." (Come on, that's funny.)

The top names in Canada for 2013 this year are Emma and Carter, according to Canadian Living Magazine.

Parents who have chosen these names will be well advised to order labels with their last initial tacked on, speaking from experience.

I don't see any real surprises in the list (see fact box). While we run across the occasional unusual name, Canadians are fairly traditionalist.

Celebrities are scorned when they use unusual names (Apple, Blue Ivy, and Moon Unit) and lauded when they go with traditional names.

Two of the most famous babies born this year were William and Catherine's Prince George (which makes Canadians giggle, particularly those in northern B.C.), and Kim and Kanye's new reality production, North.

I wish others had followed the pseudo-metaphor of the name and phrase North West.

Halle Berry couldn't have gone with either Straw or Blue?

It would have killed Toni Braxton to go with Hicks? (Only new moms will appreciate that one.)

For the record, my kids are Victoria, Alexander, Bridget and Nicholas. Not that Penny Buckworth wouldn't have been fun.

Top names of 2013

According to Canadian Living magazine, these were the top names for boys and girls this year.

	Boys
1.	Carter
2.	Christopher
3.	Hunter
4.	Joseph
5.	Joshua

	Girls
1.	Emma
2.	Hailey
3.	Isabella
4.	Jada
5.	Matilda

Kanye and Kim surprised the world when they named their baby girl North West. GETTY

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Top headlines of Hollywood's 2013

They did what? It was a shock-and-awe year in celeb gossip, and Metro's editors never hesitated to chime in on the tabloid chatter

Love them or hate them, it was hard to get off the blinged-out, baby-making bus that was Kimye this year. GETTY IMAGES

Pop culture gets a bad rap, according to Metro's gossip editor, Dorothy Robinson. Sure, it's lowbrow (especially when Miley Cyrus decides to take her clothes off with no deference to taste or talent) and it births fame-hungry monsters (Kimye, you are a creation even Walter Winchell couldn't dream up). Yet, the hijinks and disasters of people who fly so very high take us away from the humdrum of everyday life.

Keeping up with Miley is a nice distraction from the fact that the cable bill is due. Watching Beyonce at the Super Bowl is a reminder of what is humanly possible if you have drive, talent and a whole lot of luck. And witnessing the untimely deaths of two stars reminds us that even our little lives are ones worth living. In fact, maybe we're the lucky ones, blessed to be outside looking in — instead of the other way around.

Here is what some of our editors had to say about the year in gossip:

"I didn't put the Royal Baby on my list because I thought that fell under news. Come on: Kate Middleton should NEVER be on the same list as Miley or Kim Kardashian. And although Avril Lavigne marrying Chad Kroeger wasn't earth-shaking, it was so delightfully weird that I thought it deserved a mention." DOROTHY ROBINSON

Who wasn't confused by this Canadian coupling? GETTY IMAGES

"I, for one, definitely had Beyonce winning the Super Bowl on my list. Nothing can stop her, not even a blackout. I don't even remember who actually played. All I remember is the Destiny's Child reunion and Beyonce's black lace body suit. She wins." EMILY LAURENCE

"I can't find any evidence supporting the theory that Kanye has a sense of humor; I fear he is gravely serious. We mere mortals just do not understand him." T. MICHELLE MURPHY

I guess unlike other calculated 'Look at me! I'm no longer a Disney pop princess! I'm now a woman!' coming-out moments (see: Britney in the red pleather body suit; Christina's suggestive Genie in a Bottle), Miley's coming out seems raw and unpolished. She's going more for shock value than sex appeal. Which, honestly, is slightly refreshing. Just put the tongue away, girlfriend." DOROTHY ROBINSON

Metro's picks

1. Miley Cyrus ditches her clean-cut image by twerking at the MTV awards, smoking a joint on air at the MTV Europe Awards, and working with photographer Terry Richards — and those are just some of her antics.
2. Amanda Bynes — see Liz Beddall's story to your right.
3. Kanye West and Kim Kardashian brought forth a baby and decided it would be fun to name her North.
4. Justin Beiber wreaked havoc in his neighbourhood with his driving, peed in a bucket, lost his monkey, and then had a drama-filled South American tour before heading to Australia for more of the same.
5. Angelina Jolie surprised the world by announcing she underwent a double mastectomy.

Amanda on our minds

Reading between the Bynes

While it seems 2013 was the year of the squeaky-clean-songtress-turned-train-wreck-tabloid-queen, there was arguably no one who was featured as consistently on Metro's Dish page as former WB sweetheart Amanda Bynes.

Multiple brushes with the law, airborn bongs, driveway fires, neon wigs and one trainwreck of a Twitter feed meant that Bynes all too often became our feature focus.

Having recently received treatment for mental illness, we hope 2014 brings Amanda some peace, health and much-needed time away from the tabloids.

LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Amanda Bynes GETTY IMAGES

Dorothy Robinson's picks

1. Miley Cyrus' crazy year.
2. The evolution of Kimye (and the birth of baby North West).
3. Beyonce wins the Super Bowl.
4. Cory Monteith overdosing.
5. Avril Lavigne marrying Chad Kroeger.

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The five worst fitness trends of 2013 we hope don't return

Year-end review. Workouts can get boring from time to time but these ideas on how to switch things up missed the mark this year.

VAWN HIMMELSBACH
life@metronews.ca

It's not a bad idea to switch up your workout routine every now and then to challenge your muscles and stay motivated. But in the quest for new ways to do old exercises, some trends might be a tad questionable.

Backwards is just backwards.

Backwards running

Sure, running can get monotonous, but is running backwards the answer? There's a reason why people are doing it: According to a study by the U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, running backwards uses 30 per cent more energy than moving forward at the same speed. And, supposedly, it's easier on your knees. But let's face it; running backwards is an accident waiting to happen since — if it's not obvious — you can't see where you're going. Not to mention it looks ridiculous.

There is nothing wrong with weightlifting. But weightlifting in the heat doesn't make sense. ALL IMAGES ISTOCK PHOTOS

Boutique/hybrid yoga

If you're into yoga, there are a variety of styles to suit your personality, from ashtanga to moksha to yin. But now, you can mix those warrior poses with … hula-hoops, trampolines and martial-arts kicks. Or do yoga on a paddleboard, to disco music or even with your dog (doga). But yoga isn't about total body sculpting or getting a cardio workout — it's about quieting your mind. And it's hard to quiet your mind while doing disco moves in tree posture.

Extreme HIIT … for average Joes

High-intensity interval training (or HIIT) has many benefits: Bursts of vigorous exercise (think squats and burpees) followed by brief rest periods can burn calories — fast. That's why we've seen the rise of workouts like CrossFit, and the Insanity and P90X DVD series. But along with the increase in popularity of these types of workouts has come an increase in injury, from slipped disks to torn rotator cuffs. According to a recent study published by The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, 16 per cent of CrossFit participants quit the program due to overuse or injury. At least it's good news for orthopedic surgeons.

Run from this trend.

Themed runs (that involve barbed wire)

Working out should be fun, and hey, who wouldn't be motivated to run faster when being chased by zombies? While themed workouts from Tough Mudder to colour runs (running through clouds of coloured cornstarch) can be motivating or push you to challenge your endurance, any athletic endeavor that involves wading through ice water under barbed wire or being zapped by live wires is questionable. Perhaps next we'll start seeing live wires attached to treadmills so you'll get zapped if you're not running fast enough.

Hot weightlifting

Traditional weightlifting remains one of the best ways to build muscle. But one of the latest fads takes weightlifting to a new level — pumping iron in the heat. The concept behind Bikram yoga (where the temperature in the room is cranked to 40.6 C with a humidity of 40 per cent) is now being applied to everything from barre to spinning and weightlifting classes. But according to a recent study by the American Council on Exercise, turning up the heat doesn't actually burn extra calories. You just think you are, all the while risking dehydration and even heat stroke. If you like the heat, best to stick to Bikram.

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Design darlings of 2013

Style gurus Steven Sabados and Chris Hyndman take a look back at the top home-decor trends of the past year, and find the standout themes included artful lighting, lived-in linen, warm gold and brass accents, and the rustic look of unfinished wood. For more chic decor ideas, watch Steven & Chris weekdays at 2 p.m. on CBC.

Emerald Green

Emerald green, Pantone's 2013 colour of the year, was eagerly and enthusiastically embraced by designers and consumers. From throw cushions to sofas and wall treatments, emerald green was undoubtedly this year's "it" colour. Emerald green is vibrant, radiant and lush and it's not surprising that its popularity also sparked a renewed interest in all things glam.

Gold and brass

This was the year many vintage favourites experienced a major comeback. Gold and brass, reminiscent of decades past, became a leading trend and surfaced anywhere from hardware finishes to decor accessories.

Gold flatware appeared on tabletops. Chrome no longer dominated kitchen and bathroom fixtures as gold and brass taps offered a warm metallic glow in the room. Brass and gold decor accents became increasingly sought after this year as the idea of mixing metallics grew in popularity.

You don't need to discard your existing finishes to incorporate brass and gold into your home decor, and that's a key factor in the success of this design trend.

Natural wood

Natural wood was the material of choice for many this year. Raw wood tables with no varnish or treatments went from being showroom darlings to standard household decor.

The versatility and durability of raw wood coupled with its natural patina over time make it a sensible and stylish solution for family living. The rustic look of natural unfinished wood has also been juxtaposed with cooler elements like chrome and glass in more formal areas of the home.

Natural wood was the material of choice for many this year, say Steven and Chris. Crate and Barrel's Big Sur Natural collection, which includes dining tables, benches and a sideboard, has a polished wax finish and emphasizes the innate character of the wood. For more details, see crateandbarrel.com. COURTESY CRATEANDBARREL.COM

Lived-in comfort: Crate and Barrel's Jeremiah Jute Back Rocker features Belgian linen. See crateandbarrel.com for details.

Left, hand-shaped brass Loki Bowl, $94, crateandbarrel.com; and below, Brass Leaf Side Table, $189 US, urbanoutfitters.com.

Emerald, which was Pantone's 2013 colour of the year, showed up in a wide range of decor products including this Mohair Fringe Throw, $199, from zarahome.com.

Lighting as art

Lighting as a form of artwork became a popular concept this year. Form reigned over function for most of this year's most desired light fixtures. In 2013, lighting made a statement in the room instead of just lighting it up. Over-scale light fixtures were also a big part of this trend. Chandeliers, pendants, sconces, table lamps and floor lamps have become key extensions of a room's style and personality.

The lived-in look

In 2013, comfort was king with a big focus on natural fibres such as linen. The relaxed lived-in look was seen in many upholstered decor pieces such as casual wingback chairs and slipcovered sofas. Even drapery has moved away from traditional silk textiles to the more casual elegance of linen. The driving force of this trend is lifestyle and the move away from traditional formal choices to more liveable no-fuss options.

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Styles with staying power

This year saw plenty of questionable clothing choices sashay down the streets, but among them were a few wardrobe wins that we guarantee won't be disappearing once the winter flurries die down.

LIZ BEDDALL
Metro World News

Rose gold

Hillberg & Berk gemstone bracelet, $240
hillbergandberk.com

Attitude Rosegold pointy toed flat, $59.99
sears.ca

Michael Kors watch, $235
watchit.ca

Embellished collars

LOFT Gilded-lace-yoke sleeveless dress, $89.50
'oft.com

Joe Fresh embellished collar silk shirt, $59
joefresh.com

Box clutches

GUESS black- and gold-tone Minaudiere, $50
guess.ca

Swarovski Star Evening Bag in silver, $650
swarovski.com

Animal prints

H&M Ballet pumps, $29.95
hm.com

Banana Republic leopard-jacquard fit and flare dress, $160, bananarepublic.ca

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Focal Length: 50mm
Aperture Range: f/1.8 - f/22

CANON EF 70-300MM F/4-5.6 IS USM
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Focal Length: 70mm - 300mm
Aperture Range: f/4.0 - f/32

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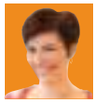
I'll take a cold cerveza with that

Year of Mexican food. You've been fooled long enough with cheesy dishes and store-bought salsa. Authentic Mexican is taking over — olé!



NUTRI-BITES
Theresa Albert
DHN, RNCP
myfriendinfood.com

Mexican has gone beyond the smothered-in-cheese dishes. ISTOCK

Remember when Mexican food meant cookie cutter platters of oddly coloured white rice with a bunch of stuff covered in cheese?

You may have gotten a bowl of pre-fab corn chips and bottled salsa instead of bread as an appetizer.

Luckily, 2013 saw the rise of true Mexican food. It showed up everywhere, from the very hip food truck culture running away with the foodie heart to the top end of just about every urban menu.

Some of the foods that we can't get enough include pulled pork, fish tacos and burritos. And you really haven't lived unless you've found churros with the caramel-like dulce de leche sauce. (Don't forget the side of tequila, which was the beverage of 2013.)

Real Mexican food is wholesome, and it varies across the country from fish-based seaside to tropical fruit interiors, but they all have three things in common: corn, chili peppers and beans. The Europeans added pork, chicken and tomatoes and North Americans topped it all off with some flair.

Taco night is no longer spice from a box mixed with ground beef and corn shells, although, they are certainly retro-welcome. Think broader.

Chicken

Toss a chicken in the slow cooker with one of the many creative jars of salsa on the market and cook all day. Pull chicken from the bones and serve with tostadas, artisan corn and wheat tortillas plus toppings like frozen corn simply roasted on a cookie sheet in the oven.

Cole Slaw

Think about a grated cole slaw mix instead of shredded lettuce. Top with cocoa nibs, any manner of chopped chilies and any combo of fresh herbs. Serve with fresh lime juice and soda water with muddled mint (go ahead add some tequila!)

Pulled Pork

Pulled pork couldn't be easier. The low and slow oven versions create the best melt in your mouth recipes. Sauce options run the gamut from barbecue sauce to the chocolate and chili based mole sauce. This one pot wonder is the best crowd pleaser to come out of this Mexican trend. Pork shoulder or arm is an affordable (if fatty) cut that can't be ruined as long as you keep the oven temperature below 300 and the time at least an hour per pound.

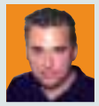
Churro Dip

Since churros are hard to find, must be fresh and deep frying is a pain (not to mention crazy unhealthy!)

Why not go with the classic churro dip: dulce de leche and forgo the donut? This sweet milk caramel sauce can be now purchased jarred but the quickie cheater recipe using only sweetened, condensed milk is ridiculously easy. Use it to drizzle onto vanilla pudding, fresh fruit or chocolate cookies and you are right on the Mexican trend. Which will, by the way, continue for a few more years... **THERESA ALBERT IS A FOOD COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST AND TORONTO PERSONAL NUTRITIONIST. SHE IS @THERESAALBERT ON TWITTER AND FOUND DAILY AT WWW.MYFRIENDINFOOD.COM**

Wine of the Year

2011 Vintage Port



LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

"I'm loading up on 2011 Vintage Port," says Peter Rockwell, Metro's expert for all things liquid. "Considered one of the best years in decades; all the big houses released a version this year. Dow's 2011 ($79.49) is spectacular; and will age well into 2063."

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Sports The Bombers were just brutal while the Jets were just mediocre. Winnipeg sports fans felt the frustration in 2013.

Metro reporter finds grass is greener in Riderville

ROSS ROMANIUK
Metro reporter

It was a remarkable season for the Saskatchewan Roughriders, particularly through the eyes of a journalist who had recently entered the land of Rider Nation feeling a little green.

It wasn't that I moved to Regina last winter without any idea of the general success of the Roughriders on the field, and on their financial balance sheets.

As a staunch Blue Bombers fan in Winnipeg for the past few decades, I had been aware of what the Green and White means to Saskatchewan, and how ingrained the team is in this province's identity.

But upon arriving in the Queen City, the enormity of the local CFL franchise's success, and the way it's appreciated in its home community, was eye-opening.

Following so many years of my football frustration in Winnipeg, with a team whose most recent Grey Cup title came before the dawn of the Internet, I was accustomed to Manitoba pigskin fans dumping on the home side at every opportunity. And for all kinds of reasons.

The Bombers have long given their supporters plenty of ammunition to do so. If their championship drought since 1990 weren't enough, the franchise took on the image of a circus a few years ago amid an endless string of coaching, front-office and public-relations blunders.

It's been nothing short of a Blue and Gold gong show as, for instance, then-coach Mike Kelly, in 2009, derided fans who questioned his on-field decisions on a weekly radio call-in show. It continued as Bombers brass held a news conference to address beer-cup "snakes" in the stands, and as the painfully slow construction of the team's new Investors Group Field turned into a joke instead of a source of franchise and community pride.

In Saskatchewan, it couldn't be more different — even with mid-season assault charges against three Riders players. The alleged nightclub incident in Regina that led to the charges has so far brought a ripple of negative attention, washed away by the season-long love-in among the team's faithful — and by its historic championship victory on home Mosaic Stadium turf.

The Roughriders' Grey Cup championship wasn't just a triumph for the team but also for Rider Nation.
JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

This past year, I've waited for a sideshow-style calamity — the kind I have seen so many times with the Bombers — to strike the Roughriders, along with fan finger-pointing and missteps by management.

I'm still waiting.

What I see, instead, are well-organized team promotions and programs completely bought into by the adoring fan base. I see a professional football club run how it should be, in a professional manner.

And in the mirror, I see a Bombers supporter impressed by Saskatchewan's football culture, and turning at least a little of his blue hue into a faint shade of green.

Storied Bombers, Eskimos in same boat

Tim Burke was canned as Bombers head coach at the end of the season.
JOHN WOODS/THE CANADIAN PRESS

It's renovation time for two of the CFL's once mighty franchises, and this time they better make it right.

Both the Edmonton Eskimos and Winnipeg Blue Bombers are in rebuilding mode after a pair of ugly 2013 campaigns that left fans shaking their heads in both towns.

"What went wrong? I have no answer for that," veteran Eskimos defensive back T. J. Hill said as his season ended.

The mood was as sombre in the Bombers locker room as players looked back on what might have been.

"It would be a sad thing if I left Winnipeg with this taste in my mouth," said Terrence Edwards, leader of the Bombers' receiving corps, who knows he has few seasons left.

Edmonton and Winnipeg have a lot in common.

Close to worst

In 2013, the Eskimos finished 4-14, their worst since the league went to 18 games, and the Bombers fell into the CFL cellar at 3-15, tying their worst ever 18-game season.

Other CFL teams may struggle to fill seats, but not the Bombers or Eskimos. They have loyal fans, although lately they haven't had much to cheer about and there is always a chance their patience will finally run out.

Both are community-owned teams and both finished their 2013 seasons by sacking their coaches.

For the Bombers, it was two coaches in two years, with Paul LaPolice getting the hook mid-2012 when Tim Burke took over. Kavis Reed at least had three seasons in Edmonton.

Both teams also have had a bit of an off-field circus going in their management offices in recent years that have kept negative headlines before local fans.

But above all, perhaps, both teams also have a long history of winning that makes it even tougher to swallow defeat.

The Eskimos can claim to be the most successful franchise of the modern era, with 13 Grey Cup wins starting in 1954 and five in a row between 1978 and 1982. Their most recent was in 2005.

The Bombers are no slouches, with a league-leading 24 appearances at the Grey Cup and 10 wins. But their last was in 1990, when they beat Edmonton. THE CANADIAN PRESS

4 SPORTS

All aboard the Jets' 2013 roller-coaster

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Matt Larkin
winnipeg@metronews.ca

The fun part about reviewing Winnipeg's entire 2013? It includes a season-and-a-half of hockey, as the lockout pushed the start of last season to January. The Jets are the epitome of a roller-coaster team, so that theme feels appropriate. Strap yourself in and enjoy the ups and downs of Winnipeg's calendar year.

UP: Andrew Ladd's breakout. The Jets captain exploded for 46 points in 48 games last season, easily the best per-game production of his career. While his scoring is down this season, he's been a monster in shootouts (6/9).

DOWN: The trials of Evander Kane. No one can figure this über-talented kid out. In January 2013, he made headlines by shaving a reference to rapper Lil Wayne into his hair. This season, Kane has battled injuries and even been scratched by coach Claude Noel. In between, he's often been dynamic, capable of taking over games with his speed, ferocity and goal-scoring ability. Will he be traded?

UP: Jets finally go west. Winnipeg was granted its long-desired move to the West, and the new Central Division, in March. The new conference hasn't treated the team hospitably at all, but this was welcome news when the NHL announced it.

DOWN: Injuries galore. Zach Bogosian, Dustin Byfuglien, Kane and many others spent time on the IR. The most horrifying injury of all: Zach Redmond sustaining a severed femoral artery when a skate caught him in a February practice.

UP: The 2013 draft. The Jets made out like bandits, nabbing hot prospects in blueliner Josh Morrissey, goalie Eric Comrie and scorer Nic Petan, among others.

DOWN: Tobias Enstrom's mugging. Crime apparently exists in Sweden, as the puck-moving blueliner was knocked unconscious during a summer robbery at an ATM.

UP: Michael Frolik. The Jets' mild wave of off-season activity didn't yield many impact players – sorry, Devin Setoguchi – but Frolik, poached from Chicago, has been a very handy checker.

DOWN: Alexander Burmistrov. The former first-rounder bolted for the KHL in the summer. Among the alleged reasons: he clashed with Noel, was jealous of Olli Jokinen's playing time and was miffed when the Jets sent him to the AHL instead of Russia during the lockout.

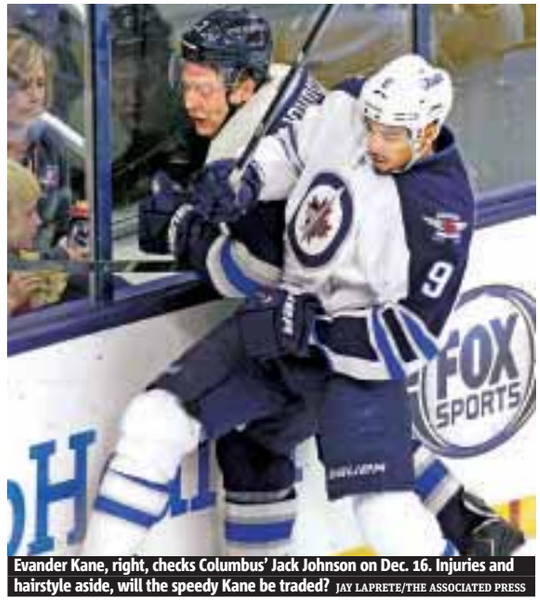
UP: Letting the kids play. They haven't dazzled every night, but Mark Scheifele and Jacob Trouba earned their tickets to the NHL. It was nice to see them make the team for the 2013-14 season.

DOWN: The whole "playoffs" situation. Yeah, about that…the Jets just can't seem to find their way to the big dance. Their latest heartbreak was finishing four points out of ninth in April. The Jets are hanging by a thread in this season's hunt, too.

UP: Teemu Selanne. Because we should end 2013 on a high note. In October the 'Finnish Flash' returned one last time to the city that launched his Hall of Fame career. He should retire after this season, so good on Jets fans for giving him such a warm send-off.

Teemu Selanne tosses a puck to the crowd in his last game in Winnipeg before he hangs up his skates at the end of the season. The farewell to the 'Finnish Flash' is one of the few high notes in the Jets' roller-coaster year. TREVOR HAGAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Andrew Ladd's been a shootout monster (6/9). JOHN WOODS/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE



Evander Kane, right, checks Columbus' Jack Johnson on Dec. 16. Injuries and hairstyle aside, will the speedy Kane be traded? JAY LAPRETE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The past year has produced several highs and many lows for Canadian teams and athletes. The following storylines grabbed our attention above all the others.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

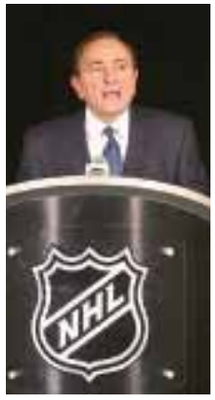
1 The end of the NHL lockout

Hockey fans rejoiced when the NHL and the NHL Players' Association reached a tentative deal to end the lockout in the early hours of Jan. 6.

The agreement was ratified by the board of governors three days later.

Just over five months later, the Chicago Blackhawks won their second Stanley Cup in four years.

Then in November, the league signed a massive new television deal with Rogers Communications worth $5.2 billion over 12 years.



NHL commissioner Gary Bettman apologized following the lockout. GETTY IMAGES

2 A season of disappointment

The Toronto Blue Jays came into 2013 as World Series favourites after a blockbuster off-season that included a 12-player megadeal with the Florida Marlins and the acquisition of reigning National League Cy Young winner R.A. Dickey. But with the city buzzing at the thought of meaningful September baseball for the first time since the team's championship years in 1992 and 1993, the campaign was bust from the start.

Brett Lawrie TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

3 Raonic's rise

Tennis star Milos Raonic became the first Canadian to crack the ATP top-10 list.

The Thornhill, Ont., player made the Rogers Cup final in Montreal and was also instrumental in leading Canada to the Davis Cup semifinals.

Also making big gains on the court in 2013 were Vancouver's Vasek Pospisil and Montreal's Eugenie Bouchard, who both shot up the rankings.

Milos Raonic GETTY IMAGES

4 CFL double for Cornish

Calgary Stampeders running back Jon Cornish became the first Canadian in 35 years to win the CFL's most outstanding player award.

Cornish, who was also named the league's top Canadian for the second straight year, is the first Canuck to be named CFL MVP since Ottawa Rough Riders tight end Tony Gabriel in 1978.

Cornish finished the 2013 season with 1,813 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns.

Jon Cornish went on to win the 2013 Lou Marsh award as Canada's top athlete. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The top 5 sports stories of the year

5 Green crush

The Roughriders won the Grey Cup in Rider Nation. GETTY IMAGES

The Saskatchewan Roughriders became the third straight Grey Cup host to win the trophy, defeating the Hamilton Tiger-Cats 45-23 on Nov. 24.

The Riders won the 101st edition of the CFL championship in front of their rabid fans at Mosaic Stadium in Regina, with Kory Sheets rushing for a Grey Cup-record 197 yards and two touchdowns to help his team to just its fourth title.

"The one thing that led us to a dominant performance was that the fans were unreal," said Riders coach Corey Chamblin. "The whole (stadium) was green."

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You are on the threshold of a spectacular breakthrough. Which only goes to show that when you focus on a goal and follow up on it consistently, you can be a success. But don't get too full of yourself.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You need a change of direction and the planets will see that you get it. But don't worry. You will like what the next few weeks bring your way very much indeed.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You are who you are for a reason. If you stop wasting time fantasizing about who you would like to be and focus on doing a better job of who you are, you will soon be both successful and happy.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Your problems are not as bad as you think, so quit worrying. Cosmic activity in your opposite sign of Capricorn will bring relationship matters to a head over the weeks, but there is no need to panic. You'll survive.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You may be tempted to change something that has worked for years, but is that a good idea? There is every possibility that you will go too far and change things in a revolutionary rather than an evolutionary way.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Play to your strengths and don't let what others are doing affect you in any way. There are some things you do better than most and those are the things you should be focusing on.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If you have been taking a loved one for granted, this could be a tricky day. Somehow you need to convince them that your feelings are still the same but it will take more than just words.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Something important is about to happen and chances are you will enjoy it. Most likely it will have something to do with your social life, so get out into the world and smile big!

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You may come into money over the next few days but it would be wrong to count on it to get you out of trouble. The only way you are going to improve your financial situation is to cut back on your commitments.

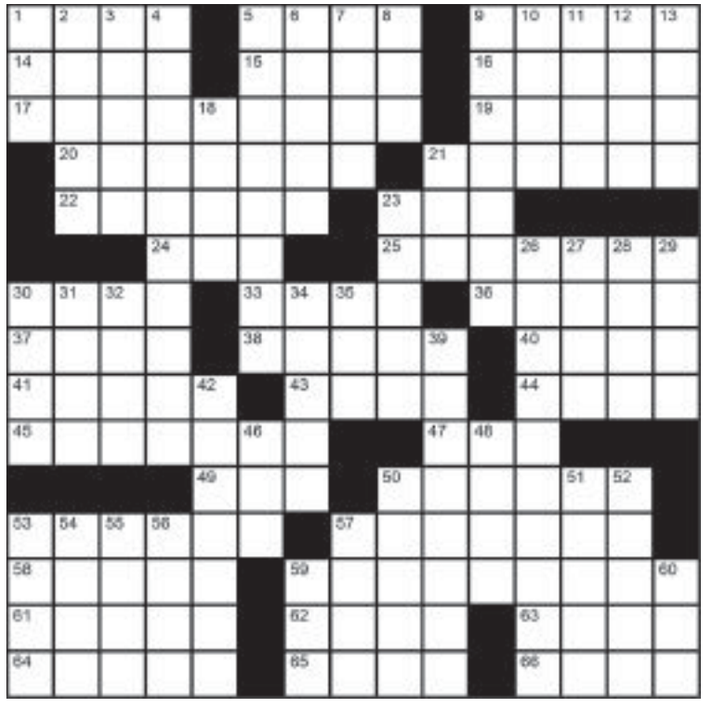
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
As cosmic activity in your sign reaches a peak over the new year period, you'll have to deal with situations that in the past you've tried to avoid. The good news is solutions can be found, but you've got to act now.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
If your present approach to a problem is not working then clearly you need to tackle it from a different angle. Some people say you're too inflexible, too set in your ways to change. Prove them wrong.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Pay attention to what loved ones tell you over the next 24 hours because they can see something that you missed. If you listen to what they say and act on their advice, it could save you trouble. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

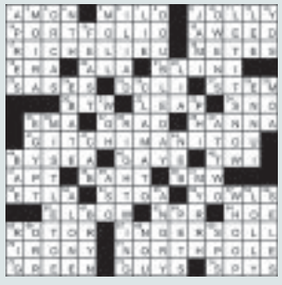
See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Pasta, e.g.
5. 17th Greek letters
9. Mother-of-pearl
14. __ code
15. Nobleman
16. Once more
17. December 26th significance: 2 wds.
19. Rene of movies
20. Be drifting alone at sea ...but suddenly become joyful!: 2 wds.
21. Slightly adjusts
22. Accompaniment
23. Musical fifth note, variantly
24. Exclaimed "That hurts!", say
25. Shopping: Door-__ special
30. George Michael's '80s group!
33. Architect Mr. Saarinen
36. France's longest river
37. Rush
38. Pilotless aircraft
40. Gift Tag: To and __
41. Nimbi
43. Prince of Wales' motto, Ich __ (I Serve)
44. Dick Tracy's beloved, __ Trueheart
45. '50s TV series about a Quebec family, "La famille __"
47. Best, __-rated
49. Fee-fi-fo-__
50. North or South, in The States
53. Neil Young song: 2 wds.
57. Subscriber's extension
58. Wickerworker's willow
59. Traditional pudding of Newfoundland: 2 wds.
61. Billy Bob Thornton flick, "The Man Who __ There" (2001)
62. 'Myth' suffix
63. National Velvet author Ms. Bagnold
64. Tiffs
65. Foundation
66. Lines of travel, for short

Down
1. Taxi
2. Sprang up
3. T. __ (Some dinosaurs)
4. __-__, Quebec (Former PM Brian Mulroney's birthplace)
5. Viewed as
6. "In case you __ noticed..."
7. Toward the mouth
8. Slick
9. Arctic whale having a spiral tusk
10. Chill
11. House, in Havana
12. Board game
13. Biblical grandson
18. Sugar substitute, Sweet'_ __
21. Maple Leafs, on scoreboards
23. Elegant biscuit
26. Ski slope surface sometimes: 2 wds.
27. Contract
28. God of love in Greek mythology
29. Sleep stages, commonly
30. Gift __
31. Transport stuff
32. Prefix to 'phobia' (Fear of heights)
34. Canadian fashion designer Mr. Morali-oglu
35. French queen's mate
39. Mire
42. Attempts
46. Amusing
48. __-dokey
50. Manet painting contemporary
51. Razz
52. 1966 Michael Caine film
53. Awesomenesses!
54. Office request [acronym]
55. Marge's daughter
56. Prince Michael of __ (Queen Elizabeth's cousin)
57 Costa __
59. Taradiddle
60. Hose-using rescue units, for short

Dec. 24th's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

Dec. 24's Sudoku

3	9	1	7	8	4	2	6	5
8	2	7	5	3	6	4	1	9
5	6	4	2	9	1	3	8	7
1	7	5	3	6	2	9	4	8
6	8	9	1	4	7	5	2	3
4	3	2	9	5	8	1	7	6
2	5	8	4	7	9	6	3	1
7	1	3	6	2	5	8	9	4
9	4	6	8	1	3	7	5	2

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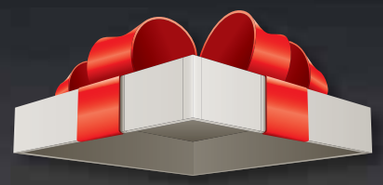
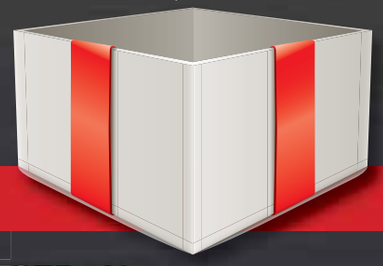


SAVINGS UP TO
$18,295¥



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2013 FORD FUSION SE

MSRP: $26,399

11 IN STOCK

SAVE $6,500

CLEAROUT PRICE:
$19,899*
OR **$119*** B/W

Stock # 136106

2013 FORD FOCUS SEDAN

MSRP: $18,249

13 IN STOCK

SAVE $5,250

CLEAROUT PRICE:
$12,999*
OR **$89*** B/W

Stock # 316552

2013 FORD ESCAPE SE

MSRP: $32,599

3 IN STOCK

SAVE $6,850

CLEAROUT PRICE:
$25,749*
OR **$159*** B/W

Stock # A96202R

2013 FORD F-150 S/CAB 4X4

MSRP: $40,549

25 IN STOCK

SAVE $15,171

CLEAROUT PRICE:
$25,378*
OR **$157*** B/W

Stock # D35533

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TUES DEC 31: 10-5 WED JAN 1: CLOSED THURS JAN 2: 10-9 FRI JAN 3: 10-9 SAT JAN 4: 10-6 SUN JAN 5: 11-5

*See store for details. Financing on Approved Credit. $99 Admin Fee. Cannot be combined with any other offers. Although every precaution is taken, errors in price or specification may occur in print. We reserve the right to correct such errors. Pricing in effect until January 5th, 2014. While quantities last.